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Q: What are your views on the Saudi request for F-15 enhancement items and AWACS aircraft? Can you assure us that you will oppose sales that could jeopardize Israel's security?

A: In his confirmation hearings, Secretary Haig stated his commitment to Israel's security, noting the vital importance that we never be perceived to be wavering in these obligations. I strongly support this commitment and will be keeping these interests firmly in mind in my recommendations to the Secretary.

Israel's defense is a central and crucially important facet of our interest in the Middle East, but not the only interest we have in the region. Of parallel importance is the security of our other friends in the area, and we must help these governments build the self-confidence that can only come with strong defense establishments. I would add that strong as used here is a relative term but one of immense importance if we are to secure their cooperation not only in protecting our mutual interests but also in eliciting their eventual help in the peace process.

On the specific issue of F-15 enhancement items and airborne early warning aircraft for Saudi Arabia, on March 6 we announced our proposal to sell to the Saudis conformal fuel tanks and AIM-9L missiles for their F-15 aircraft. We also announced our agreement

to sell the Saudis aerial surveillance aircraft, subject to further determination of their specific requirements, and to be responsive on providing a refueling capability.

We have not taken these decisions lightly. The package we submit to Congress will be one which, in our judgement, does not significantly increase the threat to Israel's security.

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